



16 May 2006

### Memorial Day and “Owning the Edge”

1. Memorial Day is a time to honor our fallen comrades and recognize the sacrifices of those defending our great Nation today. As we enjoy some well-deserved time off over the upcoming holiday weekend, let us not forget the many Soldiers and civilians who are away from their families fighting the Global War on Terrorism and supporting other contingencies.
2. Our deployed personnel are confronted with unique challenges every day, many of which stretch the limits of current Army doctrine. They must routinely perform operations “on the edge.” These operations require immediate, on-the-spot decision-making skills. Their decisions may very well determine the success or failure of the mission. For this reason, leaders and Soldiers must be knowledgeable and confident in making the right decisions when balancing the risks against mission accomplishment.
3. To help modern leaders and Soldiers make informed choices, the United States Army Combat Readiness Center developed a campaign called *Own the Edge*. This campaign, which is available at <https://crc.army.mil/readiness/>, acknowledges the risks associated with our operations, helps individuals define which risks are acceptable and unacceptable, and promotes modifying our operations as necessary to manage those risks and “own the edge.” This process of managing risk is known as Composite Risk Management (CRM).
4. CRM widens our focus on accidents to include all sources of loss, since losing combat power to enemy action is no different than losing combat power in an accident. Historically, we have lost more of our Soldiers to accidents than we have to enemy action. CRM involves the same five-step risk-management process, but the concentration is now on all losses—tactical, accidental, and on and off duty.
5. The Army’s campaign aims at getting the CRM message down to first-line supervisors and individual Soldiers. CRM enables Soldiers to own the edge, no matter where they are in the fight, by teaching them how, instead of what, to think and challenging them to be smart when it comes to managing risk. When Soldiers wake up each day—whether in combat, training, or off duty—we want them to ask themselves one simple question: “What could take me or my buddies out of the fight today?” If you are fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan, it could be the enemy. However, if you are driving during the upcoming 4-day weekend, it could be alcohol, fatigue, or speed. No matter what the threat may be, the most effective way to counter it is CRM.

6. Memorial Day marks the traditional beginning of summer, which is historically the most dangerous time of year in the Army in Europe. This is a perfect opportunity for each of us to implement CRM in our daily activities. In doing so, we should concentrate on our main causes of serious injuries and fatalities, and be aware of the increased likelihood of these accidents when alcohol is involved:


- Motor-vehicle crashes.
- Drownings in unapproved swimming areas.
- Falls from balconies and windows, and down stairwells.
- Being struck by trains or motor vehicles.

7. Over the upcoming months, I ask you to consider the consequences of your actions and watch out for your battle buddies, family members, and friends. We must think of what we can do to keep ourselves and our comrades safe and combat-ready.

8. Whatever your plans are for the holiday weekend, take time to remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our great Nation. Identify the edge and ways to avoid going over it, learn to be adaptive and innovative, and recommit yourself to doing what it takes to stay alive. *Own the edge!*



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